

**Rhizomes and Non-linear Pathways:**  
New Approaches to Narrative in the  
*Competitive Hobbyist* Documentary

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.....David Shaerf

## Abstract

This PhD study will serve to question and explore questions and methods of narratology (more specifically narrative structure) within the construct of the documentary filmmaking process. The arguments that follow in the written section of this thesis will serve as a text that allows a synthesis between my practical work in the documentary film, *The Love for the Game* (2010), and the underlying narratological theories posited in this PhD submission.

Ultimately, this thesis' aim is to contribute to and expand upon theories of narrative structure within documentary film; a largely underdeveloped area within documentary theory. More specifically, the thesis is inspecting the genre of documentary which I am calling *competitive hobbyist* films: a group of films that has recently emerged within the documentary field of filmmaking which closely inspect niche interest groups within a competitive environment.

The documentary titled *The Love for the Game* (2010), then, will document the community that surrounds the game of Backgammon (predominantly in the United States). Both the film and supporting text will look at new approaches to documentary practice within the *competitive hobbyist* genre. More specifically, an inspection of the film's narrative structure serves to expand upon the *competitive hobbyist* genre and examine how the films within this genre are approached from a narratological perspective.

I will conclude by illustrating how my research, looking specifically at alternative narrative structures, deploying non-linear, *Rhizomatic* forms, is relevant, not only to narrative fiction films, but also very much within documentary film. Moreover, I will illustrate how these non-linear forms have affected the way documentary filmmakers may approach the genre of competitive hobbyist documentaries.

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